

Exhibition of old Textiles  
1925

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# OLD TEXTILES



**APRIL 14 to MAY 3, 1925**

**Free daily 10 A. M. to 6 P. M.**

**Sunday 2 to 6 P. M.**

**Weaving Demonstration**

**4 to 5 P. M.**

**BALTIMORE MUSEUM OF ART**  
**MOUNT VERNON PLACE, 101 W. MONUMENT ST.**

**46-1925-10**

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The Baltimore Museum of Art was incorporated to "encourage and promote the study and enjoyment of the fine and the industrial arts and to aid in the application of art to manufacture and to practical life."

The Museum was opened February 22, 1923, in the Garrett House which had been lent for a limited time. The building has since been purchased by a group of the Trustees in order that the Museum may remain in its present headquarters pending erection by the City of a permanent building, in accordance with the popular vote authorizing the sale of bonds for the erection of a structure to house the Baltimore Museum of Art.

There have been forty-five exhibitions with attendance of nearly 80,000. Teachers and pupils, clubs of men and women have met frequently to hear lectures and talks in the galleries. Exhibitions are lent to nine centers in high schools, settlements and club houses.

The work is maintained chiefly by gifts and membership. Annual dues are \$10, \$25 and \$100; a single payment of \$250 or more creates of Life Membership.

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VELVET PRAYER RUG  
Indian, early XVII Century  
Lent by Duveen Bros.

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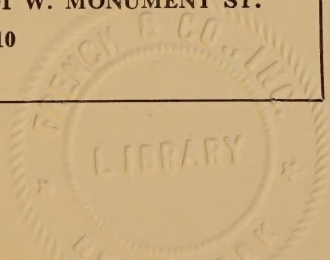
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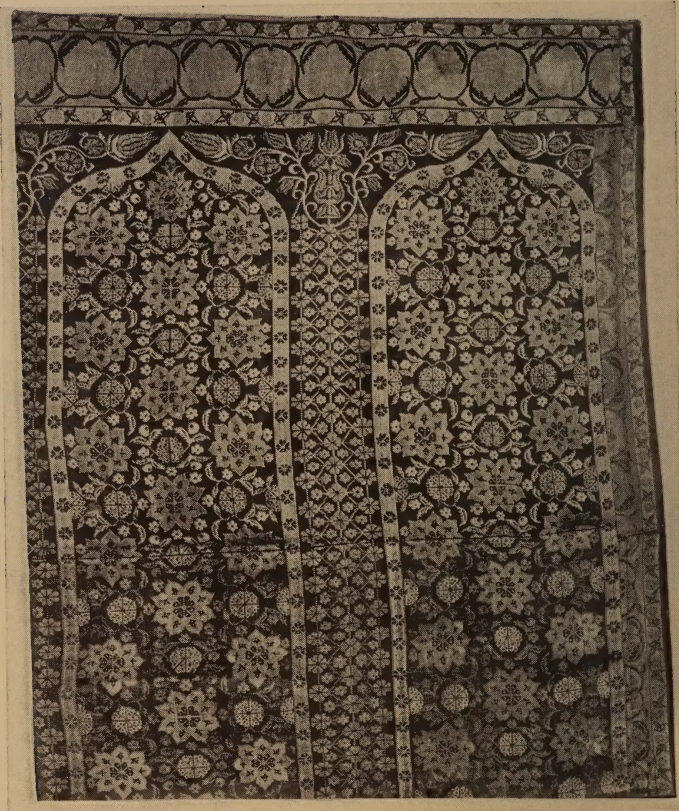




## LENDERS

The Trustees of the Baltimore Museum of Art extend cordial thanks to those who have so kindly lent objects for this exhibition. All lenders are Baltimoreans unless otherwise noted. Much of the success of the exhibit is due to the expert advice of Dr. R. M. Riefstahl, lecturer at New York University.

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**DAMASCUS HANGING**  
**Late XVI Century**  
**Lent by D. K. Kelekian**

# A LOAN EXHIBITION OF HISTORIC TEXTILE FABRICS

BY R. M. RIEFSTAHL, NEW YORK UNIVERSITY

This collection of textiles is not, does not aim to be, all inclusive. It would be impossible to give, by means of two hundred examples, a complete history of the art of weaving of all times and all countries. Much that is beautiful and significant must be omitted. The person interested in the textile art of the Far East will find little here. The person interested in modern fabrics, many of which deserve a place beside the fine fabrics of the past, will also be disappointed. All that has been attempted is a bare outline, by means of examples, of the main steps in the development of European textile art. A few Oriental (Near Eastern) fabrics have been included, chiefly because of their great influence on the weaves of the West.

## WOVEN FABRICS

A textile fabric consists of warp and weft. The warp is formed by threads stretched parallel to each other on a loom like the strings of a harp. Other threads interwoven by means of a shuttle through the warp, form the weft. In the simplest type of weave, the plain cloth weave or "binding" as it is called in technical language, the weft goes all the way through the field of the warps and back again, alternately over and under the single warps, as in darning. But in a tapestry weave, the wefts do not go all the way through the field of the warps. A weft of one color is intertwined back and forth over a part of the field; then a weft of another color is introduced and intertwined back and forth over another part of the field as the pattern demands, and so on until the field is entirely covered with interlocked spots of varicolored thread forming a design.





**CLOTH OF SILVER HANGING**  
**Indian XVII Century**  
**Lent by D. K. Kelekian**

## Coptic Woven Fabrics

Almost the earliest fabrics existing are the so-called "Coptic" fabrics, of which the present exhibition contains a representative series. These weavings, though found in Egyptian tombs of the fourth to the seventh century A. D. may be called European, for, as similar fabrics pictured on mosaics in Ravenna, Rome and Constantinople show, they are examples of the materials used during the late Roman, or rather the early Byzantine period, all over the Mediterranean world. The discovery of these Byzantine fabrics some forty years ago caused a great sensation among scholars, who soon recognized their importance in the history of textile in the Western world.

But more important for us than the history of these early fabrics are their designs. It seems to me that this group of textiles offers one of the finest lessons that can be had in simplicity of design and color combination. Many persons are inclined to think that design the best which shows the most skilful rendering of many details, which show three-dimensionality and the most realistic interpretation of light and shade. From this point of view the French Louis XIV textiles are the finest in design of any in this exhibition. But the "Coptic" textiles are based on an entirely different conception of beauty, an Oriental conception. Their designs are flat surface ornaments, which have no interest in realism, do not aim, as a Chinese critic said of Western art, to put "the three dimensions where they are not." Flowers and plants, the entire stock of classic and old Oriental motifs, amorini, flower urns, men on horseback, animals and birds in opposite representation, dancers, and geometric designs are woven into gay, clear and simple ornaments that tell their story with no more pretension to logic than there is in a meandering Arabian Night's tale. It is difficult to arrive at a real understanding of the beauty of these simple designs through the eye alone. They almost demand the sketching pencil of the student.



EPINGLE CLOTH OF GOLD  
Italian XVI Century  
Lent by P. Jackson Higgs



## Medieval

Medieval textiles are rare. In this exhibition you will find but few to illustrate the story of the gradual rise of the textile industry in Europe. That story is one of the most interesting chapters of the economic history of the west; for textiles are and always have been a barometer of the industrial energy and prosperity of a people.

Europe, emerging from the Dark Ages, found itself with two great capitals, one at the extreme East, one at the extreme West. There were many minor capitals, but not a single one of these cities was of really great importance as a center of trade, art or civilization. The two great centers were Constantinople, the capital of the Eastern Roman Empire, and Cordova, the capital of the Omayyade Caliphate of Arab Spain. For centuries, the small amount of precious silk weaves used by Christian Europe were supplied by Constantinople. Only gradually, from the twelfth century on, trade and an attendant prosperity came to the Italian cities Palermo, Amalfi, Pisa, Genoa, Venice. With increasing prosperity there rose in Italy a textile industry of simple character, with medallion patterns closely following the heraldic designs of Byzantine fabrics. A final impetus was given to the growing trade of Italy by the Crusades. The Italians were shippers for the Crusaders. Italians and Byzantines were rivals in the Eastern trade. In 1204 A. D. the allied Venetians and Crusaders sacked the city of Constantinople. Byzantine trade never recovered from that blow, and the Italian city republics became the chief traders of the Mediterranean and the distributors of Oriental merchandise in Europe. So it is that the Italian textiles of the thirteenth and the fourteenth centuries show, in addition to Byzantine inspiration, the influence of the textile art of the Near East.



✓  
**GENOESE VELVET**  
**Late XVII Century**  
**Lent by P. W. French & Co.**

## The Renaissance in Italy

Toward the end of the thirteenth century, Near Eastern textiles themselves underwent a great change. With the overthrow of the Sung dynasty in China in 1280, following the conquest of Bagdad by Hulagu in 1258, the Mongols connected the Mediterranean with the Yellow Sea and opened the West to Chinese influence. The introduction of Chinese textile designs into Europe helped to accomplish the "loosening up" of textile patterns which had already been begun under the influence of the Near East. The earliest dated Chinese fabric that has so far been discovered in Europe is of the year 1304 (part of it is now in the Metropolitan Museum, New York). From about that time on, Chinese motifs, such as rapidly moving phoenixes and "kylin" animals, curved stems with attached peony flowers, appear in Italian textiles manufactured mainly in Lucca and Venice. In the present exhibition is one fine specimen of the Lucca "Chinoiserie" of the fourteenth century.

These brocades though beautiful, are of simple technique. A really high technical achievement was reached in another type of fabric, that of velvet weaving. The Venetian velvets of the fifteenth century are masterpieces of skill and of beauty. Though the Venetian late Gothic pomegranate velvets show in their detail a revival of the classic acanthus, they remained "Gothic" until deep into the sixteenth century. Until then they do not employ any of the motifs of the Renaissance, such as the classic urns, the "grotesque" motifs, etc. They enjoyed an extraordinary popularity, both as garments and as wall-hangings. They appear very often in paintings of the French, Burgundian and German schools of the period; indeed they are so frequently depicted in Burgundian paintings, that scholars long thought them to be of Flemish origin. In the end however, the Renaissance style of Florence triumphed and, about 1540, the pomegranate velvets disappeared. Technically, they remain the masterpieces of European textile art.





PERSIAN VELVET  
Early XVII Century  
Lent by P. Jackson Higgs

Two specimens in the present exhibition, the fragment with the delicate Tudor rose and pomegranate design, and the gorgeous velvet cloth of gold cope, bear witness of their quality. These two pieces represent the two main types of design developed in Italy in the second half of the fifteenth century. The manufacture of similar velvets continued during the entire fifteenth and the sixteenth century.

The Renaissance designs bring in an entire new stock of motifs, taken from the decorations of classic architecture. The acanthus spiral, the classic urn, grotesque satyr heads, female and male caryatids, dolphins and birds growing out of acanthus spirals, are among the most frequent. But the foundation of the design—ogives with floral ornaments in the centers—is carried over from the previous age.

### **Persia and Turkey**

The most gorgeous weaves of the second half of the sixteenth century were, without doubt, executed in Persia and Turkey. The figured velvets of Persia, which obtained an extraordinary richness of polychrome, by the introduction of supplementary colored warp pile threads into certain sections of the design, the rich Persian cloths of gold and silver, and the thick weaves of Broussa, in Turkey, which intertwined layer after layer of silk wefts with resplendent metal threads, were far superior in technique and at least equal in beauty of design to anything produced during the Renaissance period in Europe.



EPINGLE CLOTH OF GOLD  
Spanish XVI Century  
Lent by P. W. French & Co.



## **Late Renaissance in Europe.**

The late Renaissance, in the process of gradual transformation into the Baroque, introduces new motifs, such as semi-naturalistic flowers, consistent with the Baroque trend toward realism. It is at this period that the final separation of "dress-goods" and "draperies" takes place. The great churches and the lofty "saloni" of Renaissance palaces still demand as hangings fabrics with large repeats. On the other hand, the "Spanish fashion" in dress, with its closely tailored bodices and puffed sleeves, requires fabrics with very small designs. So the period produces on the one hand the small and charming designs of cut and uncut velvet on satin ground and the striking damasks, brocatelles and Genoese velvets of huger and huger repeats.

Towards the middle of the sixteenth century, Italy begins to feel the result of the cutting off of her life force—the Eastern trade—by the Portuguese, who had found the sea-route to India around the Cape of Good Hope. The old route, India-Alexandria-Venice-Augsburg-the Netherlands, is replaced by the new route India-Cape of Good Hope-Lisbon-Antwerp, which enriches the countries of the Atlantic sea-board of Europe instead of those of the Mediterranean. Before long the trade with the Americas develops to add to that enrichment. And successively Portugal, Spain, the Spanish Netherlands, Holland, England, and France rise to prosperity. After 1650 trade, industry and finance are on the decline in Italy and France with Lyons, Tours and Paris as centers, takes the lead of the Italian textile cities.

### **French Designs**

In French hands, the draw-loom is perfected. With its perfection, brocading, the intertwinning of additional colored wefts in limited sections of the warp, develops almost infinite possibilities. Designs of fifteen and eighteen brocaded hues against a delicately damasked background are no rarity. The technique is particularly

favorable to the development of the naturalistic flower patterns demanded by a Baroque taste now at its height. Naturalistic flower designs had formerly been worked out in the borders of Flemish tapestries. They now riot over silk weaves. The aim of the textile designer is a perfection of reality, with contrasts of light and shadow with three-dimensional depth. Everything that is round and bulging is dear to the designer of the Louis XIV period—pumpkins, pomegranates, apples, grapes, peonies, cabbage leaves, all boldly modeled as if in the round, all proclaiming the skill of the weaver. Technical masterpieces are produced in France during this period, but as a rule the designs are characterized by a certain pompous moroseness, relieved only occasionally by a capricious touch of “Chinoiserie,” or the glitter of silver and gold threads.

After the death of the “Roi Soleil,” in whose latter years there was but little sunshine, the Regency brings in a gay revival. Delicate pastel shades, blues, pinks, and celadon greens tend to replace the stuffy purples and browns of the Louis XIV period. Gay rose garlands intertwined with lace ribbons replace the vegetables and cabbage-like roses. The “Chinoiserie” comes fully into its own and textile designs depict a paradise in which the French and the Chinese are charmingly mingled, a paradise peopled by philosophers who, in the love for flowers and wine, do not disdain the eternal feminine. It is the period of the delightful textile compositions of Philippe de la Salle (Lyons, 1723-1803).

The Roman ruins of Pompeii, discovered in 1749, inspire a new classical revival. The radical classical revolution of the brothers Adam begins in England in about 1760. In France, the Louis XVI style, while reducing and simplifying the size of the patterns and introducing vertical stripes, is only a slight transformation of the Louis XV. A radical change, such as that introduced by the Adams into England, comes into French textiles only with the neo-classicism of the Directoire period.







**"AMERICA" DETAIL OF "LES QUATRES CONTINENTS"**  
Toile de Jouy, French, 1782  
Lent by Miss Eleanor Merrell

## PRINTED FABRICS

It was at about this period that the secret of textile printing was finally revealed to the West. From the early Middle Ages to the late seventeenth century, Europe knew only rather primitive textile printing processes. The principal among these was that of wood-block printing with pigments. In this process the design is carved in relief on the block. Then the raised part of the block is inked with color and the color is stamped on the cloth. The coloring matter used for this type of printing is a pigment mixed with oil, resin, varnish or albumen. Since this pigment does not pervade the fibre of the fabric, but merely adheres to it, it is liable, however fast the color, to be rubbed off in the process of washing. The East, especially India, knew other and better processes of textile printing by which the pattern could be dyed into the fabric, the dye permeating the fibre in such a way that the color could not be washed out and could be destroyed only with the cloth itself. Though analagous processes of dyeing were known in Europe, they were used only for plain cloth dyeing and never for producing patterns. Dyed patterns were the secret and the monopoly of the East.

Among the main processes employed by the Indian textile printers was, first, the "resist" or "reserve" process. In this process the pattern is printed with wood blocks or painted on a fabric, not in color, but in a "resist" such as wax or a mixture of glue and flour. Then the cloth is steeped in a cold dye, say indigo. The patterned parts, covered by the resist, of course do not "take" the dye, and when the resist is washed or boiled out, the pattern appears white on blue. This is the technique of "batiks." The process is obviously possible only with cold dye.

In the second process of the Indian textile printers, the mordant process, boiling dyes are used. Certain dyes wash out in water unless they are fixed to the fabric by a mordant. A mordant is simply a chemical which, in combination with the dye produces throughout



CHINTZ  
Portugese XVIII Century  
Lent by Carvalho Bros.



the fibre a chemical combination of brilliant color that is not soluble in water. The Indians, instead of steeping the whole cloth in mordant, printed or painted the mordant in a pattern on the cloth. Then the cloth was dipped in the hot dye, taken out and washed. After the washing, the parts of the cloth that had been impregnated with mordant appeared in a pattern of brilliant fast color, elsewhere the dye had readily washed out, leaving the cloth in its original whiteness.

These processes were absolutely unknown in Europe when beginning with the early sixteenth century, Portuguese, Dutch and English traders imported into Europe "pintados" "(painted cotton cloths) or "chintzes" (the Indian word for "polychrome") in which the various Indian techniques were combined to produce a most colorful effect. These hangings became the rage in the fashionable world, where they were used for hangings and spreads as well as for garments, and their vogue brought considerable wealth to India, whose craftsmen alone knew the secret of their manufacture. From the beginning the West endeavored to obtain possession of the secret. The Dutch painter Pieter Coeck van Aelst who went to Constantinople in 1533 to study dyeing processes for a Brussels tapestry weaver, is said to have brought the art of the indigo resist print to Holland. However that may be, Holland was undoubtedly the first country of Europe to gain possession of the Indian chintz processes. English, Germans, Swiss and French in turn learned the secret. Soon a growing cotton and linen printing industry put fear into the hearts of the silk manufacturers. As early as the late seventeenth century, European governments prohibited the importation of Indian chintzes in order to protect native industries; later, for the sake of old-established silk industries, they prohibited the manufacture of chintzes in Europe. But all the laws proved ineffective and were finally repealed. The French law was repealed in 1759 and immediately textile printing developed tremendously. In 1760 the famous Oberkampf established his workshop in Jouy-en-Josas, in the

Bièvre valley, near Paris and began the manufacture of printed fabrics. Oberkampf was the first to employ to any great extent European designs for printed fabrics. Up to his time European chintzes had depended almost entirely on Oriental designs such as the tree of life, floral trees, etc. Only the German makers of blue and white resist prints had introduced biblical scenes, views of the celestial Jerusalem and other quaint peasant motifs into their designs. Oberkampf, however, received his patterns from a "modern" artist of the period—Jean Baptiste Huet (1740-1811) who employed in his designs rustic scenes, mythological compositions, "scènes galantes" and later neo-classic motifs.

The detail required for these subtle compositions could not have been rendered with the rather clumsy blocks carved out of wood. Oberkampf introduced instead engraved copper plates, such as are used for modern etchings or dry-points. Technical progress followed upon technical progress. Wooden roller presses, operating on the same principle as modern rotary printing presses, quickened the work tremendously. Toward 1794 Oberkampf replaced the wooden rollers by engraved copper rollers. At about the same time the Indian mordant process was perfected. Instead of painting or printing the mordant on the cloth the entire cloth was steeped in the mordant and the design was then printed on the cloth in color. The union between dye and mordant was achieved by passing the cloth through hot steam after the printing. Again the process of textile printing was quickened and cheapened. Soon, as a result of long effort, Europe succeeded in applying steam power to the spinning and weaving of cotton, and textile printing was transformed from a cottage industry to a factory industry. Today, the East, its secret lost to Europe, imports most of its printed textiles from the West. Its own industry has dwindled almost to nothing.

The present exhibition offers a brief survey of the cotton printing industry. It includes a few East Indian printed cottons of characteristic design. A group of Portuguese chintzes shows how Portuguese textile

printers interpreted these designs. Later, Portuguese chintzes take over European designs, French and Georgian, and reproduce them in naive variations. What are generally known as Portuguese chintzes are frequently, however, English chintzes made for export, often striped and of particularly gay polychrome, according to the Southern taste.

The charming works of Oberkampf and of the English mills working in his manner are of particular interest to Americans, not only because the subjects often depict the struggle for liberty of the United States but because such chintzes were much sought after for use in homes of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century. The English chintzes, too, with their delightful flower and bird designs were a charming part of the early American setting. Many of the old designs are reproduced by the modern textile industry and new designs of scarcely less merit are being turned out each year. Chintzes, on account of their gaiety and their simplicity and their practicality, are particularly fitted to the modern American interior.

A great deal has been said about the lack of originality in the textiles of the nineteenth and the twentieth century. The weavers and designers of the past hundred years have had enormous tasks to master. The Jacquard loom, invented in 1805, changed weaving from a hand industry to a machine industry. Even greater than the task of the modern weaver is the task of the modern designer. While the designer of the past had a comparatively limited number of motifs to use as inspiration, the modern facility of photography and easy travel has brought within reach of the designer textiles of all countries, so far as they exist, of all times. Those he cannot actually see are available through books and reproductions. He has an almost overwhelming richness of motifs from which he must choose wisely. In accordance with the demands of the public he makes many reproductions—excellent reproductions. But he also turns out new designs. Just as the designers of the past chose old motifs from among the scanty stock at



their disposal and put them together in new combinations so the modern designer adapts old motifs from his enormous stock to new designs fitted to the times. The great technical possibilities of the Jacquard loom and the range of materials at his command, make possible a much greater variety of effect than the weavers of the past could hope to obtain. Looked at closely, our time is not as barren as some would have us think.

AMERICAN WEAVING  
AND  
COSTUMES





## THE HAND LOOM

BY MARGARET E. HAYDOCK

The loom of colonial days was massive and simple in construction, designed to produce several types of textiles both durable and beautiful. Approximately seven feet high, it includes in its framework not only the parts essential for its operation but the seat for the weaver. The loom was hand hewn and hand made as well as the fabric woven upon it. The loom being used in this exhibition dates from about 1700 to 1750.

Operations are practically the same as in either the simpler primitive types or the later more complex machines, namely:—the raising and lowering alternately, sets of warp threads to form the “sheds”, throwing the shuttle, and driving the weft home adjusting it with the batten; the means of obtaining results, however, and materials used differ. Fastened with wooden pegs there is scarcely any metal, only that used in supporting the batten and for securing the cloth beam. Threads of warp and weft were never brought in contact with metal; hells or heddles were made of string causing no wear on the threads as they were drawn up and down in the process of shedding; likewise the reed or comb was made of bamboo or whalebone so that the threads through all the processes of weaving were very kindly handled, probably accounting for the longer life of the fabrics of that day and generation.

A weaver's equipment then included many other articles such as spinning wheels, for flax and wool; the quill for winding bobbins and spools; a clock wheel for skeining the yarn; swifts to hold the skeins; spool rack and warping bars; accessories to the loom, numerous shuttles, temples or tenterhooks for regulating the width of cloth and so forth.

Many processes requiring skill and patience were required before the actual work of weaving was begun.



## OLD COSTUMES

The costumes of a century or more ago speak so clearly of the time and of the materials made and used that a few articles have been included in this exhibition.

Colonial governors from the middle of the 17th century lived in a style similar to that in Europe, especially in England and France. Their ladies and those of the many other wealthy families imported their silks, chiefly from France, just as they secured the best bricks in Holland and wall-papers in England.

The exhibition includes the wedding vest and coat of a Spanish gentleman who was Envoy Extraordinary Minister Plenipotentiary from that country to the United States shortly after the Declaration of Independence. These interesting garments have been lent by great grand-daughters.

Several pieces of heavy brocaded silk from dresses worn by Martha Washington, strangely enough all yellow, have been lent by descendants of the Custis family

Thus, with the aid of a few pieces of mahogany furniture that also date from the latter part of the 18th century, we are able to reconstruct the way people lived and dressed in this country during that interesting period.





H. E. HOUCK & Co.,  
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